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SUBJECT: MORE NORTHERN UGANDAN OFFICIALS GOING TO JUBA

REF: KHARTOUM 1894

11. (SBU) Summary: Ugandan officials view this week's back-and-forth by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) delegation as nervous "antics" rather than a threat to the peace process and continue to support confidence-building efforts by northern Ugandans. A group of five northern Ugandan parliamentarians will be trekking to Juba to take part in the negotiations. They will join the group of local government and religious leaders led by Gulu District Chairman Norbert Mao to serve as a resource to both the Ugandan Government and LRA delegations. The parliamentarians view their role as one of bolstering the confidence of the LRA leadership in the peace talks and the reconciliation process. They are concerned that Vincent Otti's preoccupation with the International Criminal Court indictment will keep him away from the talks, thus preventing real progress at Juba. The Ugandan parliament may soon amend the amnesty law to cover the LRA's top leadership. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The LRA's back-and-forth this week, including its declaration of the unilateral cease-fire and "walk-out" is to be expected, according to Norbert Mao, who recently led a delegation to see Joseph Kony at Garamba National Park. He told poloff on August 11 that the LRA walk-outs are nervous "antics" designed to get attention and bide time while deputy LRA commander, Vincent Otti, mulls over his participation at Juba. Mao said that last week Otti agreed in principle to join the talks, but continues to fear being turned over to the ICC despite the Government of Southern Sudan's assurances that it would not do so. (Reftel) Machar also offered Otti sanctuary in southern Sudan after a peace deal is concluded, according to Mao. In addition, Chief Negotiator Riek Machar reminded Otti that Sudan does not recognize the ICC, but Otti is concerned about being "snatched" by the United Nations in and around Juba. Mao said that he offered himself to the LRA as collateral for Otti's safe passage and return to Juba. He told Kony and Otti that he would remain at Garamba in exchange for Otti's participation as long as necessary. To date, Mao has not been taken up on his offer.

13. (SBU) Mao clarified press reports that he would participate in the talks on the LRA delegation. Mao described the LRA as "overwhelmed" by the peace process and in search of "comfort. He told Kony that could not participate on the LRA delegation because the LRA did not wage war on behalf of northern Ugandans. However, he suggested to Kony that the northern Ugandan delegation could serve in an advisory capacity as a middle group representing northern society to both the LRA and the GOU. Mao is leading the participation of northern Ugandan local, traditional, and religious leaders at Juba in close coordination with the Presidency to bring northern Ugandans into the process and to persuade the LRA that its members can be accepted back into

society. Chief negotiator Riek Machar has agreed to allow them to sit in on negotiating sessions, according to Mao. Reagan Okummu, MP from Gulu, told poloffs that a second group of the 15 Acholi members of parliament will be headed to the talks in two weeks to discuss with the LRA traditional means of establishing peace and reconciliation.

¶4. (SBU) A more important aspect of parliamentary participation for the LRA is that the Ugandan parliament will likely amend the national amnesty act to include the names of LRA leaders as part of the peace process. As a result, the traveling parliamentarians told poloffs, they can make President Museveni's amnesty pledge the law of the land. One member of the delegation, Ezati Wadri, the parliamentary opposition leader, told poloffs that the potential for "external interference" (i.e. ICC) looms large in his direct discussions with Otti and among parliamentarians. The resolution of the war in northern Uganda is a national issue on which there is consensus across party lines. In his opinion, parliament, including the opposition, will support legalizing the amnesty for the LRA's leadership in the interest of bringing peace.

¶5. (SBU) The GOU will continue to view with suspicion the LRA's demand for it to declare a cease-fire, according to Foreign Ministry and military officials. The GOU wants the modalities of a cease-fire to be negotiated and signed at the upcoming negotiating session. Government officials claim the LRA has never respected a cease-fire in the past. As a result, the Government is pressing for the cease-fire discussions to begin at the talks or for the rebels to disclose their locations as a pre-condition for a cease-fire declaration on its part. The LRA is unlikely to accept this pre-condition, according to Mao.

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COMMENT
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¶6. (SBU) Despite a week of frustrating developments and contradictory reports from Garamba and Juba, Ugandan officials remain optimistic that the northern war is in its end game and that it is only a matter of time before a deal is reached. There is a feeling, however, that Vincent Otti must be persuaded to participate for the breakthrough to occur and that the ICC remains the cause of the blockage. In the meantime, the GOU continues to support local initiatives regardless of the colorful personalities and inevitable local interests at play, especially those of Chairman Mao whose photograph hugging Kony is the subject of derision. At the national level, there appears to be cross-party support for amnesty for the LRA leadership though the Government will need to work with non-Acholi ethnic groups in districts such as Lango and Teso in order to codify Museveni's pledge.
BROWNING